



Alabama Beach Mouse Range-wide Habitat Conservation Plan

Status Update: Steps for Issuing an Incidental Take Permit

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the City of Gulf Shores are working together to develop a range-wide Habitat Conservation Plan for the Alabama beach mouse. The purpose of this plan will be to provide consistent conservation measures which can be implemented across the entire range of the species, while streamlining the process for individual property owners to obtain the permits necessary to begin work on their homes.

Below we have outlined the steps required prior to issuing an Incidental Take Permit to the City of Gulf Shores for their Rangewide Habitat Conservation Plan. We will continue to update this document so you can monitor the progress of this action. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service-Daphne Field Office at (251) 441-5181.

- The applicant submits an application for an Incidental Take Permit and a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). – **COMPLETED by the City of Gulf Shores, January 2006**
- The Service's Daphne Field Office reviews the application and HCP for completeness, prepares a draft Environmental Assessment (EA), which is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Field Office also prepares a draft Federal Register Notice. – **COMPLETED by the Daphne Field Office, January 2006**
- The documents, along with a Certification of Completeness, are submitted to the Service's Regional Office in Atlanta. The Regional Office and Regional Solicitor's Office review the submitted documents for compliance with the Endangered Species Act and other regulations, as well as conduct a legal review. – **Currently in progress**
- Once any significant or legal issues identified during the Service review have been resolved, a notice is published in the Federal Register describing the proposed action and requesting public comment for 60 days. – **Not Complete**
- The Service will respond to public comments, hold a public meeting if needed, and finalize the NEPA document, either an EA or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). (*If the Service determines that the project would result in a significant affect to the human environment, an EIS would be required. Preparation of an EIS would likely result in a significant time delay before a permit could be issued.*) – **Not Complete**
- Service biologists consider all related to issuance of a permit, as well as comments received from the public, and prepare a Biological Opinion (BO) to reach a biological conclusion on whether the project would result in an adverse modification of critical habitat or jeopardize the continued existence of the species. The Service also quantifies the amount of Incidental Take allowed for the permit (either in terms of a number of individual mice that can be harmed, or the amount of habitat which can be impacted) and provides non-discretionary "Reasonable and Prudent Measures" which must be implemented to minimize incidental take. – **Not Complete**
- Based on the information in the BO, the Service will decide whether to issue or deny the permit application. – **Not Complete**